

about to head off to their annual retreat in Cambridge, Maryland, to discuss their priorities for the year, including whether to raise the debt ceiling or not. My hope is that the majority party listens to Speaker BOEHNER on the debt ceiling. Earlier this month, he said:

All I know is we should not default on our debt; we shouldn't even get close to it.

The Speaker understands that America pays its bills. Good for him. The Speaker also understands that even the threat of default will harm the American economy. And he is right. The Speaker understands that holding hostage America's full faith and credit is a dead-end plan for his party and for America.

Speaker BOEHNER, I surely hope that you prevail on the majority party. America is not a deadbeat Nation. America pays its bills.

REQUESTING MOTOR CARRIER EXEMPTION

(Mrs. WALORSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, it has been a frigid winter in the Hoosier State. Subzero temperatures and arctic conditions have forced school closings, travel bans, and challenges for the business community. The demand for propane and home heating fuel is at an all-time high.

As a result, Federal officials declared a state of emergency for the Midwest, lifting hours of service limitations for motor carriers to ensure consumers can steadily receive home heating fuel. But this waiver only remains in effect until February 11, 2014.

Today, I led a letter with Hoosier lawmakers to the U.S. Department of Transportation requesting that the emergency exemption be extended. Winter weather is unpredictable, but if we are ready to act, we can alleviate this stress for our families. This simple extension is a commonsense way to provide some much-needed relief for Hoosiers as we weather this harsh winter.

DON'T CHEAT AMERICAN FARMERS

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is a sad moment as we consider a farm bill that has the least amount of reform possible to secure passage. I am thankful that some of the most hateful and egregious—like the King amendment—have been stripped out, but the savings from direct payments will be swallowed up by enriched crop insurance.

My friend PAUL RYAN is concerned that the safety net for the poor has become too comfortable a hammock. But this farm bill is now a lounge chair for

rich agribusiness interests, who need it the least. It should be a scandal that there are more cuts to food stamp benefits while crop insurance is further enriched for wealthy agribusiness.

The time to start is now to avoid another congressional grab bag that cheats the American farmers.

Also, thank you, Trudi, for your years of dedicated service to Congress and the American people.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

(Mr. STUTZMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor in strong opposition to the farm bill conference report.

The farm bill is just more business as usual here in Washington. Last summer, the American people won an important victory for common sense and transparency when we ended this unholy alliance between food stamp and farm programs. Together, in this House, we defeated business as usual by passing the first farm-only farm bill in nearly 40 years. But business as usual fought back, and here we are today.

Not only does this farm bill recombine food stamps and farm programs, it actually spends even more than the first bill the Senate passed. This is exactly the kind of logrolling that we fought to prevent this summer.

Mr. Speaker, Congress works best when we do our work in the full light of day. Unfortunately, this farm bill was written behind closed doors. It has stripped long-term reforms. It spends money we simply don't have, and it stripped out important policies that negatively affect our livestock industry.

As a farmer and a conservative, I will not vote to take a step backwards.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF RON GREEN

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the public service of Ron Green, a U.S. Navy veteran.

Ron Green is the director of the San Joaquin County Veterans Service Office, advocating for veterans and helping them navigate the Department of Veterans Affairs. After nearly 14 years of service, as the county's VSO director, Ron Green will retire on February 1.

Before his career with the county, Mr. Green worked at the Sharpe Depot and the Defense Distribution Center at Lathrop and as a VA claims examiner. In total, Mr. Green has more than 30 years of service to veterans and the public.

As someone who knows Ron Green personally, I can attest to his commit-

ment and dedication to the veterans in San Joaquin County. Mr. Green has been personally responsible for lowering the number of homeless veterans in San Joaquin Valley. He has supported our local Veterans History Project efforts and has been a valuable partner on veterans' issues over the years, including advocating for the VA to locate an expanded regional outpatient clinic and a new community living center in San Joaquin Valley.

He will be missed by the veterans of San Joaquin County, and I wish him all the best in the years ahead. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the public service contributions of Ron Green.

SUPPORT THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE FARM BILL

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, ag producers have waited nearly 3 years for a long-term farm bill, and I would like to thank my colleagues for their efforts thus far. Policy certainty will help our country be competitive.

Last year, conferees were appointed to negotiate and resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of the farm bill. The House bill included language meant to encourage compromise on a fix to avoid trade retaliation from Canada and Mexico and bar individual States with unscientific laws from disrupting interstate commerce, something which will only burden producers and increase costs for consumers.

I tend to believe if we are going to call a piece of legislation the farm bill, the measure ought to recognize that farmers and ranchers are the primary stewards of our natural resources, as well as the animals in their care.

This farm bill does include important reforms, such as eliminating direct payments, and it helps hardworking taxpayers in finding an estimated \$23 billion in savings.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I support this return to regular order. For these reasons, I will support the conference report before us today, but it is my hope this body will act quickly to find solutions to the outstanding issues not addressed in this bill.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

(Mrs. BUSTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the fifth anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, a critical law that championed the principle of equal pay for equal work.

While this law made strides in closing the wage gap, across the country, women still earn 77 cents for every dollar a man makes for the exact same work. This gap results in more than

\$11,000 less that a woman makes every year. That means women are essentially working 84 days for free while a man takes home a paycheck.

In the district of Illinois that I serve, women make even less than that. They make approximately 70 cents on the dollar. Keep in mind that number is figured for the same work, just with much, much less income.

Equal pay is not simply a women's issue; it is an issue for the middle class and working families. When women bring home more, they are able to provide better for their families.

Because equal pay for equal work would benefit hardworking families across my region, across the State of Illinois, and across the country, it is time that Congress pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

LET'S GET TO WORK

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, last night, the President addressed America and reminded us that America is a Nation of opportunity where, if you work hard and play by the rules and take responsibility, you can succeed. But he also recognized that many Americans don't feel that, in fact, this is working for them right now. He made very specific proposals to invest in infrastructure or innovation economy, early childhood education, additional manufacturing hubs, raising the minimum wage, fixing our broken immigration system, and extending unemployment benefits.

The President expressed his willingness to work with Congress to achieve these goals. What I thought was particularly significant is these were specific proposals that are achievable if we work together.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's get to work. Let's enact these proposals. Let's move our economy forward and put the American people back to work.

As well, I wish to extend my gratitude to Trudi for her service.

□ 0915

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

JANUARY 28, 2014.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on January 28, 2014 at 6:07 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 1302.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2642, FEDERAL AGRICULTURE REFORM AND RISK MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2014

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 465, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2642) to provide for the reform and continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 465, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of January 27, 2014, at page H1269.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 30 minutes.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Massachusetts seek recognition?

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman from Minnesota opposed to the conference report?

Mr. PETERSON. No, I am not, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, this has been a long and seemingly epic journey that the House Agriculture Committee has been upon, and Mr. PETERSON, myself, our colleagues, literally 3 years, actually 4, when you consider the beginning hearings under then-Chairman PETERSON to start this process.

We have all discussed the details. We will discuss the details more in greater length in just a moment on this final conference report that reflects the net result of both the Senate and House work.

But I would say this. Whatever your feelings might be about the policy issues involved within the bill, understand, this formal conference that has now come to a conclusion, soon, I hope, to be ratified by the body, reflects at the committee level, at the floor level in the House, and, I think, in the conference level, how legislation should be put together.

Many people criticize us and this body as dysfunctional. But if they look at all of the amendments we considered, every time we took the farm bill up in the committee, all of the debate, all of the discussion, if they consider the amazing amount of amendments we considered on the floor of the United States House and all the debates and the discussion and the votes, if they take note of how long and how much

effort the principals and the conferees put into putting this conference report together, they would understand that this bill, while everyone may not agree with every line, every word, every policy in it, this bill reflects, unlike almost any that have been done for years, how it should be done—good men and women of different opinions working to get to a final product.

I hope this reflects a change in how we will do our business here across the board. I am proud of what we have done, and I am proud of how we have done it. I am proud of the reforms and savings. I am proud of my ranking member, and all my colleagues who have been involved.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, as the chairman said, after nearly 4 years of work, the House is finally considering the 2014 farm bill conference report. It has been a challenging and, at times, frustrating process, I think everybody will agree, but through it, the Ag Committee has persevered, and we did what we have always done. We worked together.

The report before us today represents a compromise. I know this is rare in Washington, but that is what is needed to actually get something done around this place. I didn't get everything I wanted. The chairman didn't get everything he wanted. That is how the compromise works.

For example, there has been a lot of discussion about dairy, but we are moving away from the old dairy program to a new program that I think is much more sensible, that has market signals in it to deal with overproduction. The only question I have is whether they are going to be strong enough. We will find out as we go through the process.

In the commodity title, I am still disappointed we didn't vote on planted acres. I think that would have been a smart thing to do, but it wasn't to be.

At the end of the day, I believe my reservations are outweighed by the need to provide a long-term certainty for agriculture and nutrition programs and the many positive improvements and reforms included in the final bill.

Among other things, the conference report will protect and improve the crop insurance system. That is probably the most important safety net. It continues current sugar policy, streamlines conservation programs so that we can continue to preserve our natural resources, provides disaster assistance for livestock producers, applies conservation protections to crop insurance, and recognizes the growing consumer demand for fresh fruits, vegetables, local foods and organics.

In closing, I want to thank the chairman for his work and congratulate him for working with us to get to a final conclusion here. Also, for his Members, our Members, for their support and hanging in there to get to this point.